



THE COUNTY OF KAUAI

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News Release

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Committee on the Status of Women announces students placing top honors in the 2020 Women's History Essay Contest

The Kaua'i Committee on the Status of Women is proud to announce students placing top honors in the 2020 Women's History Essay Contest.

The Kaua'i Committee on the Status of Women awarded fourth place to Autumn Lee. Autumn is the daughter of Polly Brun-Lee and Ryan Lee and will be a senior at Kaua'i High School.

"Autumn's essay inspired our hearts and provided a promise of hope for others. The Committee on the Status of Women encourages all young women to be who they truly are and reach their own potential," said Chair Darcie Yukimura. "We also want to recognize Vice Chair Regina Carvalho who volunteered to be the essay contest chairperson. Miss Carvalho spent a lot of time and resources promoting the essay and her efforts resulted in four outstanding finalists."

In celebration of Women's History month and to mark the 100-year anniversary of the 19th Amendment (granting women voting rights), the committee opened the contest to all Kauai public, private, charter and home-schooled high school students. They were asked to submit a one-page essay about a woman who inspired them and how. Prizes were awarded to the top four and the remaining entrants were awarded a consolation prize. The theme of the 2020 Women's History Month was "The Valiant Women of the Vote."



This is the last of a four-part series that highlighted the students winning essays. First place winner Darian Martin, second place winner Kirra Lindman, and third place Mosiah Bautista were featured in previous press releases. The Committee sends a big Mahalo to the students who participated and the teachers for their encouragement and guidance.

The Committee on the Status of Women is part of the County of Kaua'i Boards and Commissions, and the Hawai'i State Commission on the Status of Women, which develops and promotes education, interactive opportunities on issues relating to women and girls, prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls, and encouraging health and wellness awareness. You may visit the Committee on the Status of Women Website at www.kauai.gov/kccsw.

For more information please contact the Office of Boards and Commissions, Ellen Ching eching@kauai.gov or Sandra Muragin smuragin@kauai.gov.



Photo caption: Autumn is the daughter of Polly Brun-Lee and Ryan Lee and will a senior at Kaua'i High School.

Autumn's essay is featured below:

Generation after generation of women are constantly put through battles; fighting for equality, fighting to be seen as more than just their bodies, fighting to be "accepted", fighting for the generations to come after them, fighting the same battles over and over again in hopes of making a difference. Through these battles, these fights, we begin to hear their voices and with that we begin to idolize them. We hope to make a difference in someone's life as they did in ours, because though their voices that are sometimes overheard by the general public, their voice reached us for some reason. For some reason their voice sticks with us, inspiring us throughout our life.

Everyone is inspired by someone for many different reasons. As for me, I was inspired by Ellen Degeneres. You may be thinking, "Why? Why of all the women in the world, were you inspired by her?" Yes, there are so many other women in the world. Ellen didn't change the laws for the people in any way, or change the laws of America in any way, but it's not about how many people her voice spoke to, or what laws she changed. It's about the fact that for some reason her voice reached me. She gave me a strong female role-model to look up to.

I remember sitting in the living room with my mom when I was about five years old, and she was watching Ellen. At the time I had no idea who Ellen was, and I remember watching her show and learning about her story. For some reason when I was just five years old, her story really spoke to me. I had no idea why and I couldn't understand why. As I started getting older, I gradually started to realize why her story stuck with me. Her story stuck with me because hearing her story gave me someone to look up to. Someone who I could relate to. Someone who wasn't afraid to be who they were. She reached me because I was scared to be who I was. I lied to myself about who I was, I couldn't accept who I was, I wasn't okay with who I was, and I did everything in my power to deny/ avoid being... me.

Over the past decade or so of my life, I've grown tremendously. I learned to not let others decide who I am, for me. I learned that genuinely being yourself and being okay with that, enough to share it with people, is one the hardest things that we have to overcome in life. I finally came to the realization that I had to face my difficulties/ challenges and be who I wanted to be. I am definitely still working on myself, but I can honestly say that I am so much more of the person my younger self wanted to be, and I am so much more of my genuine self.

So...be who YOU want to be. Be who you are, not the person you think other people want you to be. Stay true to you and don't be afraid to do that. You don't have to change the laws of America, or change the world to inspire someone, you just have to be you.

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